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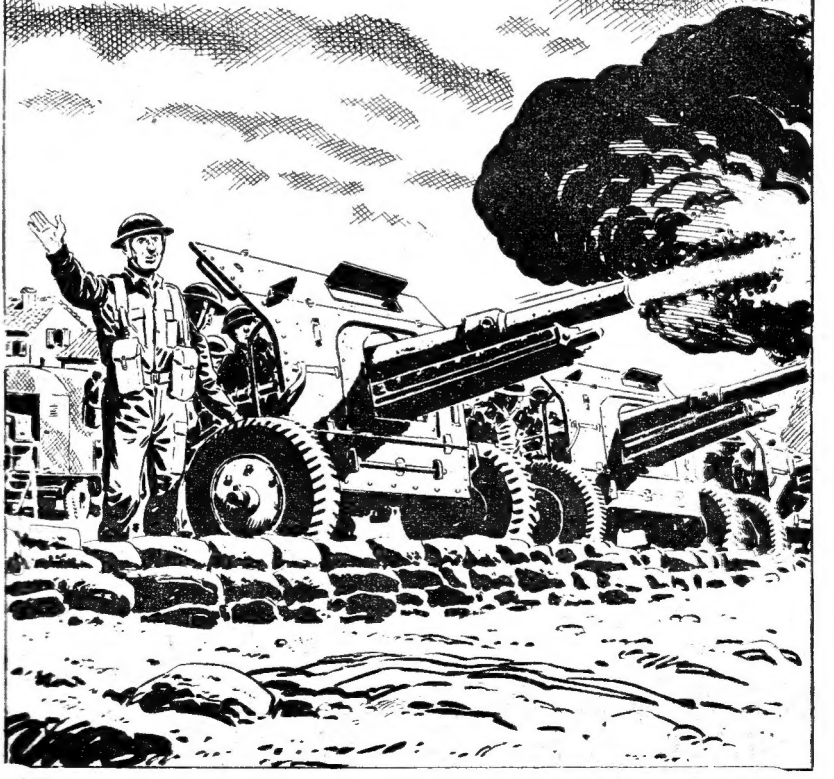
The Savage Island

THE GUN! TO THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF ARTILLERY THE GUN IS THEIR COLOUR, THEIR BATTLE-FLAG. WITH THE GUNS ON PARADE, THE REGIMENT TAKES THE RIGHT OF THE LINE, THE PRIDE OF PLACE! IT HAS DOMINATED BATTLE-FIELDS FROM MALPLAQUET TO EL ALAMEIN. IT IS A BADGE OF COURAGE, AN INSTRUMENT OF DESTRUCTION... A TROPHY... A TOTEM.



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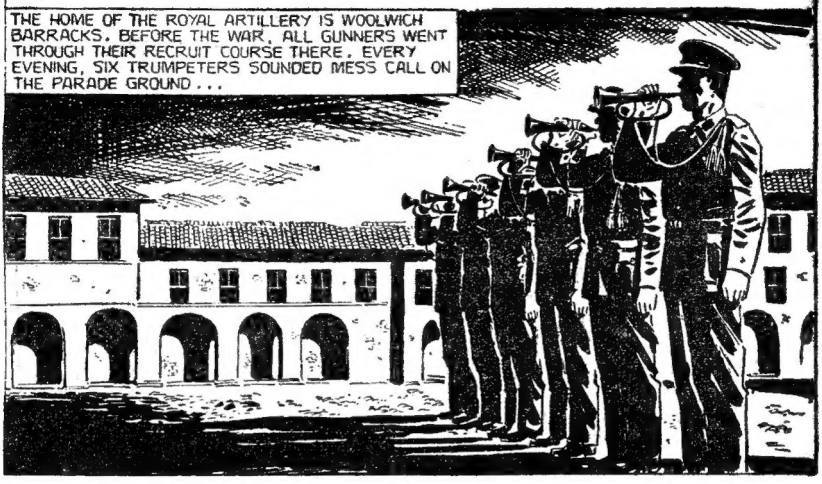
Chapter 1. GUN SMASH



COCK OF THE WALK IN THE BOYS' BATTERY, PETE RULED WITH AN IRON FIST. THE SMALLER KIDS FEARED AND HATED HIM...
THEN FIND TIME NOW! I WANT THEM FOR GUARD TONIGHT — *AND* MY BUTTONS POLISHED AND LANYARD BLANCOED. I'LL DO THE TRUMPET MYSELF —
OKAY, PETE — OKAY —

HE WOULD LET NO ONE TOUCH HIS TRUMPET — JUST AS YEARS LATER, AS A LIMBER-GUNNER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF A FIELD GUN, HE WOULD INSIST ON DOING IT ALONE.
LOOK AT PETE THERE! ANYBODY'D THINK HE'D BOUGHT THE PERISHING THING!
TREATS IT LIKE A BLOOMIN' PET!

MORE THAN ONE YOUNGSTER AT THE GRAND DEPOT BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF WHEN TRUMPETER MALONEY PASSED OUT AND WAS POSTED TO A 25-POUNDER BATTERY IN HONG-KONG.
HOW'S IT STRIKE YOU, LAD?
IT'S GREAT, SERGEANT! NO FOOLIN' — IT'S GREAT!
THIS WAS ALSO SERGEANT DAN DRURY'S FIRST POSTING TO THE CHINA STATION. THE LEATHER-FACED OLD SWEAT HAD SERVED IN INDIA, MALAYA AND THE WEST INDIES — AND NOW HONG-KONG WOULD BE LISTED IN HIS PAY BOOK —
YOU'RE GOING TO SIXTEEN BATTERY, AREN'T YOU?
THAT'S RIGHT! YOU, TOO, SERGEANT?
YES, ME, TOO. LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE SEEING A LOT OF EACH OTHER. IF YOU'RE SHOVED IN MY SECTION, BOY — KEEP THEM LIPS HARD — I WANT NO FLAT REVEILLES!
SURE-SARGE! BUT I'LL BE ABLE TO HAVE A GO AT GUN DRILL, WON'T I?

PETE GOT HIS GUN-DRILL. AT THE END OF TWO YEARS HE MUSTERED AS GUNNER MALONEY— AND THE OLD VICIOUSNESS WAS STILL THERE. PICKING FIGHTS IN DOCKSIDE BARS . . .
DARNED YANK! WHY DON'T YOU KEEP YOUR ROTTEN DOLLARS IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD?
PIPE DOWN, LIMEY!

THAT WAS PETE MALONEY ALL OVER — TRIGGER-TEMPERED AND WITH THE BEEF TO BACK IT UP!
GET THIS, YANK! THIS ISN'T CONEY BEACH!
WHAT THE HECK'S THE— AAGH!

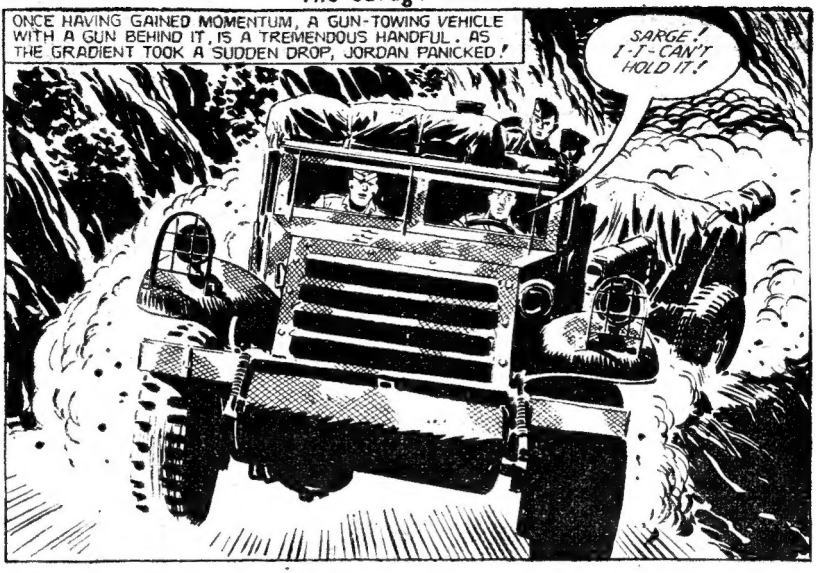
DAN DRURY SIGHED DEEPLY NEXT MORNING. HE HAD THE FINEST LIMBER-GUNNER IN THE BATTERY—AND THE BIGGEST HEADACHE!
MALONEY! WHERE DID YOU GET THAT SHINER? I HEAR YOU'RE ON THE PEGS AGAIN—I GUESS THE TWO LINK UP, EH?
LAY OFF ME, SARGE! YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND—

THE SERGEANT SHRUGGED REGRETFULLY AS PETE MALONEY TURNED SULLENLY BACK TO THE GUN HE WAS WORKING ON SO PAINSTAKINGLY.
I UNDERSTAND ONE THING—HE'D MAKE A FIRST-CLASS SOLDIER—IF HE COULD ONLY HOLD DOWN THAT MEAN STREAK HE'S GOT INSIDE HIM!

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, THE BATTERY PULLED OUT FOR AN EXERCISE IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, THE ROUGH HILLY COUNTRY ON THE MAINLAND, WHERE THE ROADS SNAKED ROUND THE INFAMOUS HILLS KNOWN AS "THE SEVEN SISTERS".

DAN'S GUN WAS LAST IN LINE. BECAUSE OF THE WINDING ROAD, STEVE JORDAN, THE DRIVER OF THE TOWING VEHICLE, HAD LOST HIS 20-YARD CONVOY INTERVAL...
TAKE IT EASY, JORDAN! WE'LL CATCH UP WITHOUT BLINDING ALONG.
OKAY, SARGE - JUST LEAVE IT TO ME!

A RECENT POSTING FROM THE U.K., THIS WAS JORDAN'S FIRST LONG RUN.
TAKE YOUR FOOT OFF, I SAY! THERE'S A HECK OF A GRADIENT ROUND THE NEXT CORNER!


ONCE HAVING GAINED MOMENTUM, A GUN-TOWING VEHICLE WITH A GUN BEHIND IT, IS A TREMENDOUS HANDFUL. AS THE GRADIENT TOOK A SUDDEN DROP, JORDAN PANICKED!
SARGE! I-T-CAN'T HOLD IT!

THE GUN SWAYED WILDLY, THE OFFSIDE WHEEL GOING OVER THE EDGE. THE VIOLENT TWIST SNAPPED THE TOWING HOOK...
THE GUN! STOP! YOU CRAZY FOOL! WE'VE LOST THE GUN!

THE TRUCK SKIDDED THE OTHER WAY, STOPPING AGAINST THE HILLSIDE. AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SLOPE, THEY FOUND A MANGLED WEAPON...
ALL SMASHED UP! IT'S ALL SMASHED UP!
I TELL YOU I'D HAVE DONE IT IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THAT CURSED POP-GUN JINKING ABOUT!

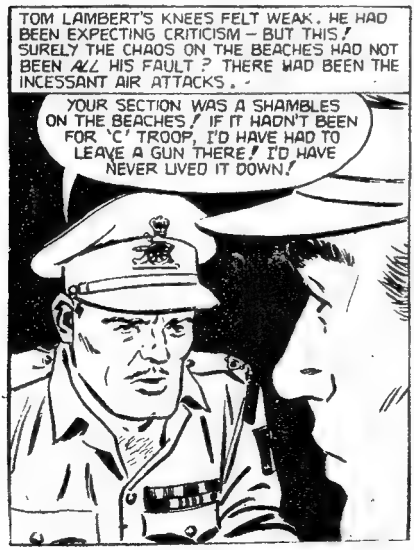
IT LOOKED AT THAT MOMENT AS IF PETE MALONEY HAD GONE STARK, RAVING MAD! HIS ANGER AT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE 25-POUNDER SUDDENLY SPILLED OVER...
YOU-YOU ROTTEN USELESS DRIVER! YOU COULDN'T DRIVE A PRAM! LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE — LOOK!

ONLY SERGEANT DRURY'S QUICK INTERVENTION SAVED THE LUCKLESS, FRIGHTENED JORDAN, FOR PETE WAS LIKE A DEMENTED FURY...
STOP THAT, MALONEY! LEAVE HIM ALONE!
I'LL KILL HIM!
YOU'RE – YOU'RE MAD! MAD! KEEP HIM OFF ME – HE'S GONE CRAZY!

WHEN THE OTHERS HAD CLIMBED BACK TO THE ROAD, ONE FIGURE STILL REMAINED. A LONELY FIGURE, HIS HEAD BOWED, AS IF SAYING GOODBYE TO AN OLD FRIEND...
MALONEY! DOUBLE UP! WE'VE GOT TO GET MOVING. MALONEY! DO YOU HEAR ME!

Chapter 2. INVASION

THE EVACUATION TO CRETE WAS COMPLETED BY THE END OF APRIL, 1941. 16 BATTERY SETTLED DOWN TO LICK ITS WOUNDS. FOR THE FIRST TIME FOR MONTHS THERE WAS A BREATHING SPACE AND THE BATTERY COMMANDER HAD SOME LOOSE ENDS TO TIE UP.
THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE EASY TO SAY, LAMBERT— BUT IT'S GOT TO BE SAID! YOU'RE NO GOOD TO ME!
SIR?


TOM LAMBERT'S KNEES FELT WEAK. HE HAD BEEN EXPECTING CRITICISM — BUT THIS! SURELY THE CHAOS ON THE BEACHES HAD NOT BEEN ALL HIS FAULT? THERE HAD BEEN THE INCESSANT AIR ATTACKS.
YOUR SECTION WAS A SHAMBLES ON THE BEACHES! IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR 'C' TROOP, I'D HAVE HAD TO LEAVE A GUN THERE! I'D HAVE NEVER LIVED IT DOWN!

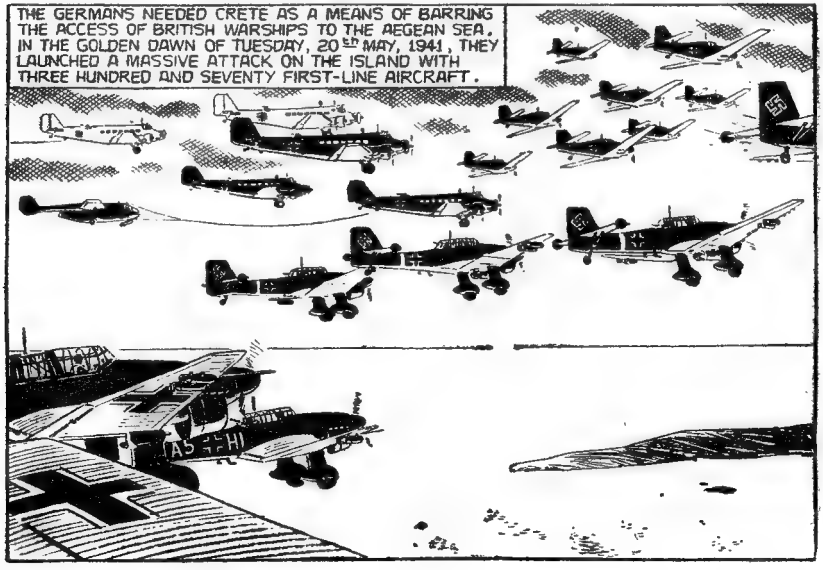
BUT— SIR! THERE WAS NO MORE ROOM ON THAT L.C.T. NOT AN INCH! TO GET THE GUN ON WOULD HAVE MEANT LEAVING MEN BEHIND.
POPPYCOCK! THE MEN WOULD HAVE GOT ON ALL RIGHT. THEY COULD HAVE PERCHED ON THE BARREL!

OUTSIDE THE MAJOR'S TENT, THE BATTERY SERGEANT MAJOR HAD LINED UP HIS MORNING CATCH OF MEN 'ON THE PEGS'. FROM THE TENT CAME THE RASPING SOUND OF THE B.C's VOICE —
NO, LAMBERT, I CAN'T TRUST YOU! I'VE ASKED FOR A REPLACEMENT AND AS SOON AS HE COMES, I'LL SHIP YOU BACK TO CAIRO.
THE OLD MAN'S IN A FILTHY MOOD THIS MORNING, DAN!

TOM LAMBERT STRODE AWAY, A MIST BEFORE HIS EYES. HE WAS YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE HURT TO THE VERY CORE BY THE MAJOR'S HARSH DECISION.
PRISONERS AND ESCORT — 'SHUN — RIGHT TURN! QUICK MARCH!
POOR LAD! HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE — MAYBE HE NEVER WILL NOW!

PETE MALONEY HAD ENJOYED HIS WAR UP TO THAT POINT. THE SIGHT OF BREWED-UP TANKS AND SMASHED PILL-BOXES, BATTERED BY *HIS* GUN HAD BEEN TO HIM WHAT A BANQUET WOULD BE TO A HUNGRY MAN.

REMANDED FOR THE C.O.! BLACK RAGE SWAMPED UP INTO PETE'S THROAT. ALL HE WANTED WAS TO GET BACK AT THE DIRTY JERRIES!
LEFT-RIGHT, LEFT-RIGHT— LEFT TURN!
B


THE GERMANS NEEDED CRETE AS A MEANS OF BARRING THE ACCESS OF BRITISH WARSHIPS TO THE AEGEAN SEA. IN THE GOLDEN DAWN OF TUESDAY, 20TH MAY, 1941, THEY LAUNCHED A MASSIVE ATTACK ON THE ISLAND WITH THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FIRST-LINE AIRCRAFT.
A5 ++ HI

THE LAST TRACES OF SLEEP WERE ROUGHLY BANISHED AS THE BRITISH GARRISON SAW THE AWFUL AIR ARMADA ROARING TOWARDS THEM...
SUFFERING SNAKES! LOOK AT 'EM — PARACHUTES! AND GLIDERS! THIS IS IT!

PARACHUTES DOTTED THE SKY, GLIDERS DRIFTED DOWN IN SILENT MENACE TOWARDS THE GUN POSITIONS OF 16 BATTERY. THERE WAS NO TIME FOR 25-POUNDER ACTION...
GET THEM BEFORE THEY LAND! BREAK OPEN MORE AMMO BOXES! MORRISON — THE BRENS!

MOST MEN FOUGHT BACK BUT SOME COWERED IN THEIR SLIT TRENCHES AT THE SIGHT OF DEATH FROM THE SKY. STEVE JORDAN WAS ONE OF THOSE...
AAAGH!
NO...NO!

THAT FIRST VIOLENT BOUT OF HAND-TO-HAND FIGHTING TRIED EVERY MAN TO THE UTMOST. EVENTUALLY, THE BATTERY CLEARED ITS AREA..AND BROUGHT ITS GUNS INTO ACTION...
CAPTAIN FERGUSON'S BOUGHT IT, LAMBERT. YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE OVER HIS TROOP. YOU STAY HERE—I'M TAKING THE REST OF THE BATTERY TO SUDA BAY.
RIGHT, SIR!

TIME AND AGAIN THE TROOP POSITION WAS ATTACKED — AND FOR ALL THEIR TOUGH TRAINING, THE GERMAN PARATROOPERS ALSO KNEW FEAR WHEN IT FACED THEM IN THE MUZZLE OF A GUN — AS PETE MALONEY FOUND OUT...
YOU CRAWLING, YELLOW HUN!
KAMERAD! KAMERAD!
THERE WAS NO COMPASSION IN MALONEY'S HEART — ONLY HATRED AND CONTEMPT. FEAR WAS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS...
KAMERAD THAT LOT!
MALONEY! WHAT THE DEVIL — THAT JERRY WAS SURRENDERING...
SURRENDERING! THEY'RE TREACHEROUS SWINE — I WOULDN'T TRUST 'EM AN INCH!

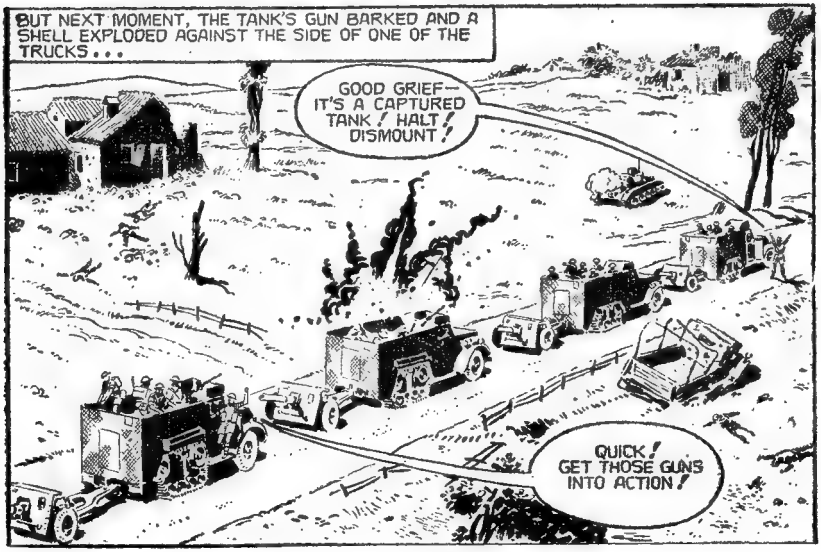
THE GERMAN FORCES GREW IN STRENGTH WHILST THE BRITISH COULD NOT BE REINFORCED. THE END WAS INEVITABLE AND ON THE 27TH MAY, CAME THE ORDER TO EVACUATE. TOM LAMBERT GROUPED HIS DECIMATED TROOP FOR THE RACE TO SUDA BAY...
ALL SET, SIR! WE'RE READY TO ROLL!
GOOD! LET'S HOPE THE COAST ROAD IS CLEAR. FOUR GUNS IN CONVOY CAN BE A HEADACHE—

FOR A MOMENT DAN'S MIND WENT BACK TO THE MAJOR'S WORDS HE HAD OVERHEARD. YOUNG LAMBERT HAD FAILED ONCE ON THE BEACHES IN GREECE... WAS HE FIT TO CARRY OUT THIS DANGEROUS OPERATION?
SIR—WE COULD LEAVE THE GUNS—AFTER SPIKING 'EM. WE COULD GET ALL THE MEN INTO ONE TRUCK. WE'D STAND A BETTER CHANCE...

NO! I'M GETTING THESE GUNS TO SUDA — OR BUST IN THE ATTEMPT! THERE WAS A MESS-UP BEFORE — YOU KNOW THAT, DRURY. IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN AGAIN.
RIGHT, SIR! I'M WITH YOU — ALL THE WAY!

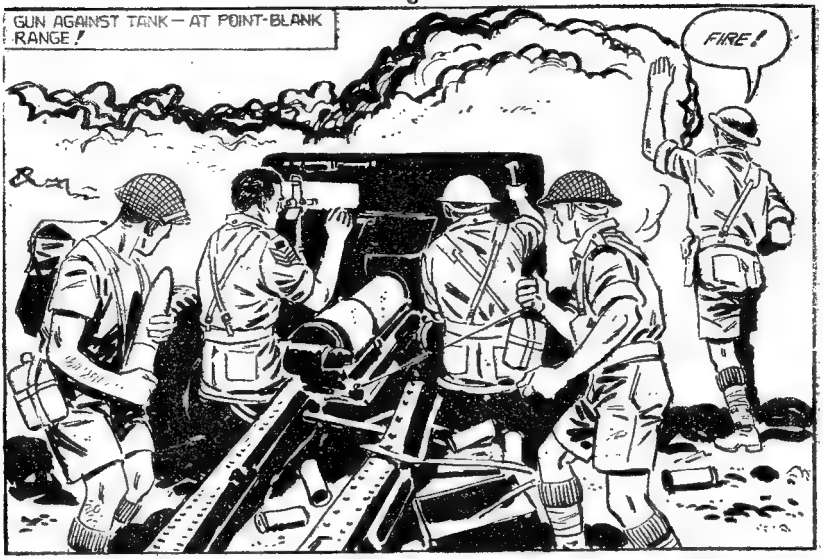
LIEUTENANT TOM LAMBERT, ACTING TROOP COMMANDER, MOUNTED THE LEADING VEHICLE, DRIVEN BY STEVE JORDAN — WHO HAD TAKEN GOOD CARE TO SURVIVE THIS FAR.
ALL RIGHT, JORDAN — GET GOING. DON'T STOP FOR ANYTHING — UNLESS I SAY SO.

THE BATTLE HAD SWEPT ON OVER THIS AREA AND THE ROAD WAS REASONABLY CLEAR FOR THE FIRST FEW MILES. ODD GROUPS WERE SEEN IN THE DISTANCE, BUT THE ONLY SIGN OF LIFE NEAR THEM WAS A TANK WHICH TOM SWIFTLY IDENTIFIED.
IT'S ALL RIGHT, JORDAN — IT'S ONE OF OURS!


BUT NEXT MOMENT, THE TANK'S GUN BARKED AND A SHELL EXPLODED AGAINST THE SIDE OF ONE OF THE TRUCKS...
GOOD GRIEF— IT'S A CAPTURED TANK! HALT! DISMOUNT!
QUICK! GET THOSE GUNS INTO ACTION!

FRANTICALLY, THE GUNNERS RACED TO BRING THE 25-POUNDERS INTO ACTION — BUT THE INITIATIVE WAS WITH THE TANK.
THEY'VE GOT NUMBER TWO AND THREE! JORDAN... GIVE US A HAND! GET THE ROUNDS OUT!
NOT BLOOMIN' LIKELY! I'M NOT AN AMMO NUMBER!

IN FOUR SHATTERING MINUTES THREE OF THE FOUR GUNS WERE BLASTED OUT OF ACTION. OF THOSE DETACHMENTS, ONLY SERGEANT DAN DRURY SURVIVED —
GET BACK TO NUMBER ONE, SIR! IT'S OUR ONLY HOPE — I'LL BE ALL RIGHT...

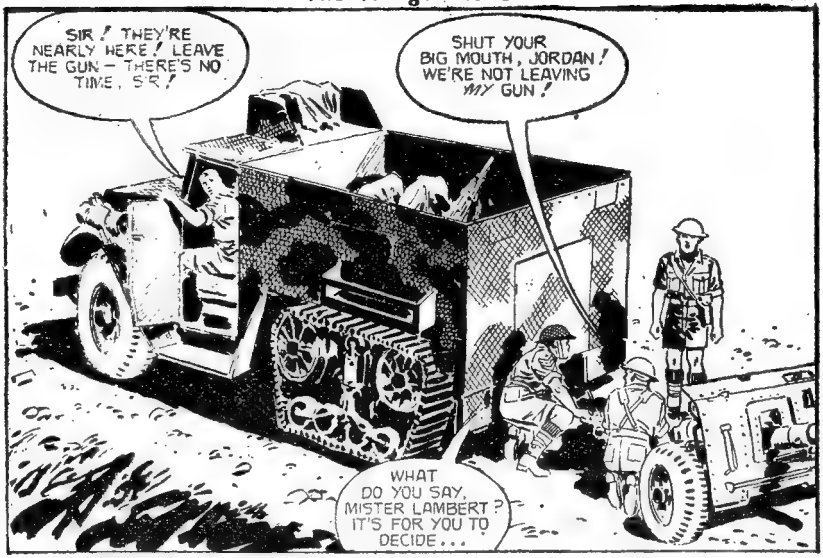

GUN AGAINST TANK — AT POINT-BLANK RANGE!
FIRE!

AN ARMOUR-PIERCING SHELL FROM THE 25-POUNDER RIPPED THROUGH THE ARMOUR AT THAT KILLING RANGE, BUT THE TANK'S FINAL SHOT WROUGHT A LAST TERRIBLE HAVOC AMONGST THE GUN'S CREW.
THEY'RE DEAD! AND THE OTHERS...
BUT WE BREWED JERRY UP, SIR! LOOK! THE TANK'S FINISHED!

SICK AT HEART, LAMBERT WALKED SLOWLY DOWN THE LINE OF DESTRUCTION. AGAIN, HE WOULD BE RECKONED TO HAVE FAILED...
POOR DEVILS — MAYBE A BETTER MAN COULD HAVE SAVED 'EM. EVEN IF WE GET OUT OF THIS LOT, IT'LL BE SOME PEN-PUSHING JOB FOR ME IN CAIRO, AFTER THIS!

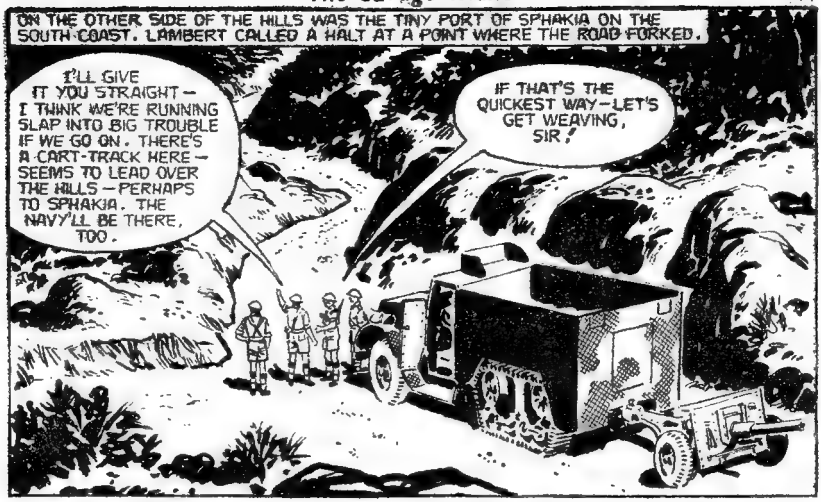
HIS BITTER REFLECTIONS WERE VIOLENTLY INTERRUPTED BY THE SHOUTS OF STEVE JORDAN...
SIR! SIR! THERE'S MORE TANKS COMING! AT LEAST THREE. STRAIGHT DOWN THE ROAD!

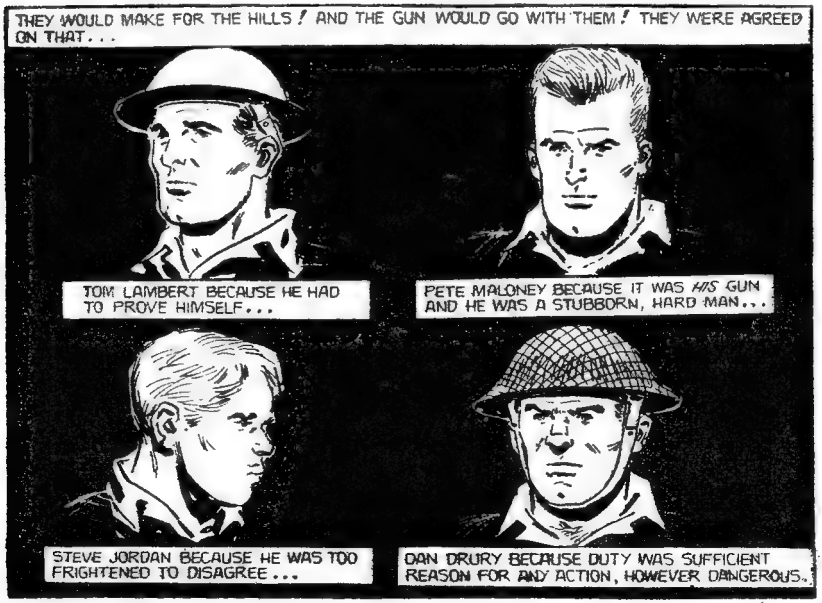
TOM JERKED BACK TO REALITY — THERE WERE STILL THREE MEN AND A GUN UNDER HIS COMMAND.
THREE! THAT'S TOO MANY FOR US — WE'VE GOT TO GET MOVING. JUMP INTO THAT TRUCK, JORDAN —
THEY'RE BRITISH ALL RIGHT — BUT WE CAN'T TAKE CHANCES AGAIN!


SIR! THEY'RE NEARLY HERE! LEAVE THE GUN — THERE'S NO TIME, SIR!
SHUT YOUR BIG MOUTH, JORDAN! WE'RE NOT LEAVING MY GUN!
WHAT DO YOU SAY, MISTER LAMBERT? IT'S FOR YOU TO DECIDE...

WITHOUT THE GUN — THERE WOULD BE A CHANCE! WITH IT — HARDLY ANY AT ALL! FOR A SPLIT SECOND YOU HESITATED — THEN...
LOOK — IT'S DARNED STICKY — BUT WE'RE GUNNERS, AREN'T WE? WE'LL TAKE THE GUN WITH US!
IF YOU'D LEFT IT — YOU'D HAVE LEFT ME, TOO!
STOW IT, MALONEY! HOOK-ON!

ONLY JORDAN OBJECTED...
IT'S SUICIDE! IT ISN'T FAIR — IT'S — IT'S GAMBLING WITH OUR LIVES!
LISTEN! ANOTHER SQUAWK OUT OF YOU AND I'LL RAM MY FIST DOWN YOUR STUPID THROAT!
MALONEY! CUT THAT OUT! HE'S RIGHT IN A WAY —
LET 'EM BE, SIR! IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO PUT SOME BACKBONE INTO JORDAN — TO KILL ONE FEAR BY A BIGGER ONE!
THERE WAS NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO DRIVE EASTWARDS — AWAY FROM THE MAIN EVACUATION PORT...
THAT'S SHAKEN OFF THE TANKS, BUT IT'S A DEAD CERT WE'LL BE RUNNING INTO GERMAN-HELD TERRITORY THIS WAY.
CAN'T WE — GET OVER THE HILLS ON FOOT?


ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILLS WAS THE TINY PORT OF SPHAKIA ON THE SOUTH COAST. LAMBERT CALLED A HALT AT A POINT WHERE THE ROAD FORKED.
I'LL GIVE IT YOU STRAIGHT — I THINK WE'RE RUNNING SLAP INTO BIG TROUBLE IF WE GO ON. THERE'S A CART-TRACK HERE — SEEMS TO LEAD OVER THE HILLS — PERHAPS TO SPHAKIA. THE NAVY'LL BE THERE, TOO.
IF THAT'S THE QUICKEST WAY — LET'S GET WEAVING, SIR!


THEY WOULD MAKE FOR THE HILLS! AND THE GUN WOULD GO WITH THEM! THEY WERE AGREED ON THAT...
TOM LAMBERT BECAUSE HE HAD TO PROVE HIMSELF...
PETE MALONEY BECAUSE IT WAS HIS GUN AND HE WAS A STUBBORN, HARD MAN...
STEVE JORDAN BECAUSE HE WAS TOO FRIGHTENED TO DISAGREE...
DAN DRURY BECAUSE DUTY WAS SUFFICIENT REASON FOR ANY ACTION, HOWEVER DANGEROUS.

Chapter 3. The FRIGHTENED MAN

THAT NIGHT, THEY BEDDED DOWN IN THE BACK OF THE VEHICLE. STEVE JORDAN SPENT THE NIGHT LISTENING FOR THE SOUND OF THE GERMAN PATROL HIS FAINT HEART TOLD HIM MUST BE STALKING THEM.
THE HILLS MUST BE SWARMING WITH 'EM. IT ONLY NEEDS A GRENADE LOBBED INTO THE BACK OF THE TRUCK...

BUT JORDAN WAS A GOOD DRIVER. HIS SKILL EDGED THEM EVER HIGHER AFTER THE DAWN START NEXT DAY. THE TRACK WAS NOT MADE FOR HEAVY VEHICLES TOWING GUNS, HOWEVER...
IT'S NO GOOD, SIR. THE ENGINE'S BOILING, WE'VE HAD IT!
WE'LL WAIT FOR IT TO COOL DOWN. YOU'VE DONE FINE UP TO NOW, JORDAN

SUDDENLY, SOMETHING SNAPPED IN JORDAN'S MIND. WHY SHOULD HE BE KILLED JUST FOR A ROTTEN GUN ?
YOU CAN'T KID ME UP WITH THAT SLUSH ! I WANT MY BRAINS TESTED, HANGING ON HERE ! I'M GOING — AND YOU CAN'T STOP ME !

EYES WIDE WITH FEAR, HE LEAPED OFF THE ROAD INTO THE UNDERGROWTH — AND PETE SPRANG FORWARD, A TOMMY GUN LEAPING TO HIS SHOULDER.
JORDAN !
THE YELLOW RAT ! I'LL PUT A BULLET IN HIM !

THROUGHOUT THE BATTLE IN AFRICA, GREECE AND CRETE, STEVE JORDAN HAD NEVER BEEN NEARER DEATH THAN HE WAS AT THAT MOMENT...
NO! LET HIM GO! HE HAS A RIGHT TO MAKE HIS OWN CHOICE.

IN PANIC NOW THAT OTHER SHOTS WOULD BE FIRED AFTER HIM, STEVE DASHED HEADLONG THROUGH THE WOODS. HE FELT NO GUILT AT LEAVING THE OTHERS IN THE LURCH. THE GUN WAS THEIR PROBLEM NOW!
PERISHING CRAZY HEROES — THAT'S WHAT THEY FANCY THEY ARE!

SCATTERED IN THE SHALLOW VALLEYS OF THE MOUNTAINS WERE SEVERAL SMALL, ROUGH CRETAN VILLAGES.
HOUSES! I'LL BET THE LOCALS KNOW ALL THE SHORT CUTS OVER THESE LOUSY HILLS! IT'S WORTH A TRY, ANYWAY—

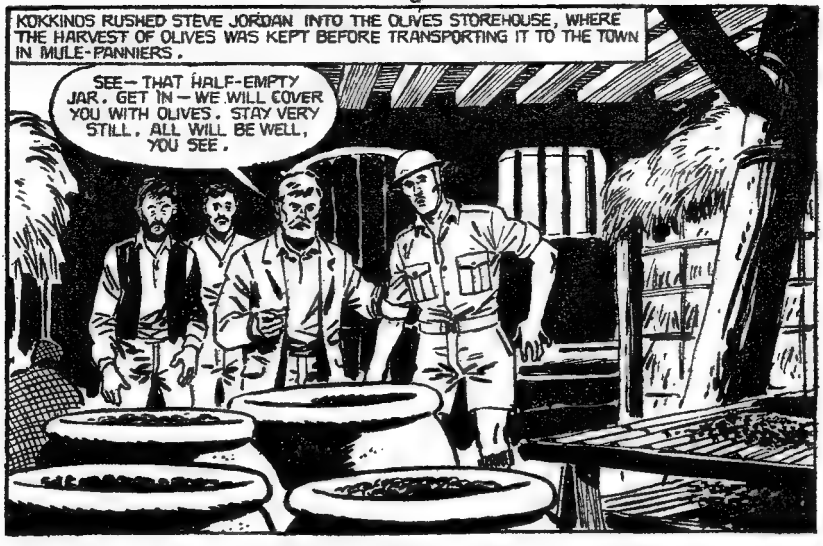
ALTHOUGH THE LONE ENGLISHMAN DID NOT KNOW IT, A SMALL BAND OF GERMAN PARATROOPERS WAS ALSO APPROACHING THE VILLAGE —
THIS WILL BE IMBROS THERE WILL BE WATER AND FOOD, PERHAPS. EVEN GOAT'S FLESH WILL BE WELCOME AFTER DAYS OF IRON RATIONS.

LEUTNANT KREUGER! LOOK! AN ENGLANDER SOLDIER! THERE MAY BE MORE—THOUGH I CANNOT SEE ANY.
ACH! THEY MUST BE STRAGGLERS. WE WILL TEACH THEM TO RUN QUICKER!

THE GERMANS SPLIT QUICKLY INTO TWO GROUPS, TO DESCEND ON IMBROS—SILENTLY—LIKE WOLVES ON A SHEEP-PEN. MEANWHILE, IN THE VILLAGE ITSELF...
YOU SPEAK ANY ENGLISH?
A LITTLE. I AM KOKKINOS. I AM—YOU CALL IT THE HEADMAN—THE MAYOR—

STEVE JORDAN WAS GRATIFIED BY THE WELCOME HE RECEIVED FROM THE CRETANS — BUT THAT WELCOME WAS TO BE HARSHLY INTERRUPTED.
YOU WANT FOOD? WATER? ALL THIS WE CAN GIVE TO THE BRAVE ENGLISH.
THANKS, CHUM! I CERTAINLY NEED A DRINK. HEY! THAT WAS A SHOT!

AT THE SOUND OF THE SHOT, THERE WAS A SUDDEN RUSH FOR SHELTER. TERROR OF INVASION HAD COME TO IMBROS.
IN HERE! COME WITH ME!
IT'S THE CURSED JERRIES! THEY MUST HAVE SEEN ME!


KOKKINOS RUSHED STEVE JORDAN INTO THE OLIVES STOREHOUSE, WHERE THE HARVEST OF OLIVES WAS KEPT BEFORE TRANSPORTING IT TO THE TOWN IN MULE-PANNIERS.
SEE — THAT HALF-EMPTY JAR. GET IN — WE WILL COVER YOU WITH OLIVES. STAY VERY STILL. ALL WILL BE WELL, YOU SEE.

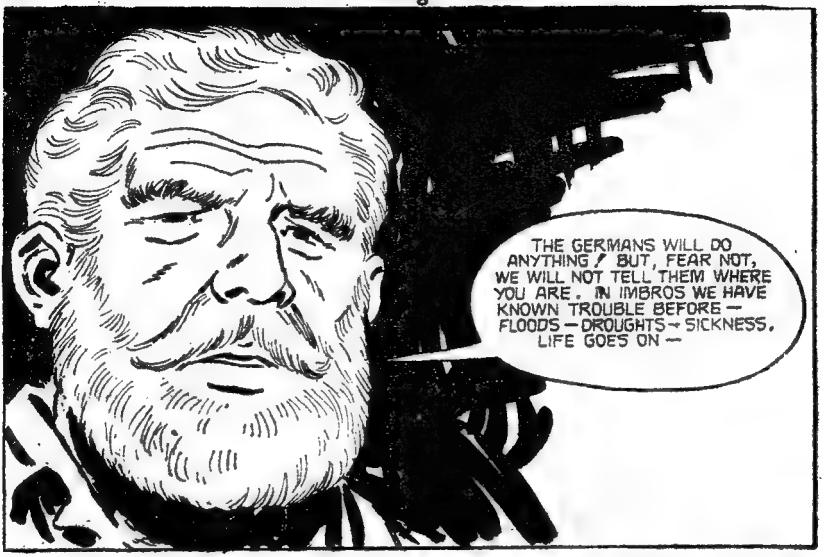
SWIFTLY, STEVE WAS COVERED BY THE BLACK-GREENISH FRUIT. THEY WERE JUST IN TIME. LEUTNANT KREUGER AND HIS MEN WERE TAKING OVER THE VILLAGE...
SEARCH THE HOUSES! THERE IS AT LEAST ONE ENGLANDER HERE. WHERE IS HE?
THE OFFICER IS MISTAKEN. THE SOLDIERS HAVE ALL GONE — INTO THE HILLS — TO SPHAKIA —

STEVE HELD HIS BREATH, THE SWEAT POURING OFF HIM, AS HE HEARD THE SEARCH REACH THE STOREHOUSE...
ACH! NOTHING BUT OLIVES! HANS— SEARCH BEHIND THOSE GREAT JARS —
NOTHING HERE!

KOKKINOS FACED THE COLD RAGE OF THE GERMAN OFFICER...
YOU STUBBORN PEASANTS! YOU WILL LEARN TO OBEY, NOW THAT WE ARE THE MASTERS. WE TEACH HARD LESSONS. LET THIS BE THE FIRST— HAND OVER THE ENGLANDER WITHIN FIFTEEN MINUTES OR I WILL EXECUTE TWO OF YOU!

THE MERCILESS THREAT OF THE NEW CONQUERORS OF CRETE FAILED TO COW THE PROUD VILLAGE HEADMAN...
SO BE IT! IF THAT IS YOUR RULE, IT MUST BE ACCEPTED. WE HAVE HEARD OF NAZI WAYS!
PIG!

THE VILLAGERS DISPERSED IN SILENCE TO THEIR HOMES AND KOKKINOS MADE HIS WAY SECRETLY INTO THE STOREHOUSE.
— AND THEY THREATEN TO SHOOT TWO OF US UNLESS YOU ARE FOUND, MY FRIEND.
BUT - BUT THEY CAN'T! NOT EVEN THE FILTHY JERRIES WOULD DO THAT!


THE GERMANS WILL DO ANYTHING! BUT, FEAR NOT, WE WILL NOT TELL THEM WHERE YOU ARE. IN IMBROS WE HAVE KNOWN TROUBLE BEFORE — FLOODS — DROUGHTS — SICKNESS. LIFE GOES ON —

IN THOSE FIFTEEN TERRIBLE MINUTES, NOT ONE OF THOSE SIMPLE PEOPLE HAD REVEALED THE FUGITIVE'S HIDING-PLACE. THE TIME OF RECKONING CAME...
YOU ARE FOOLS! YOU WILL LEARN WE DO NOT PLAY AT PRETENCE. YOU, OLD MAN — AND YOU! STAND AGAINST THAT CROSS.

THROUGH A NARROW GAP IN THE DOORWAY, STEVE STARED AGHAST AT THE SCENE. THE BLOOD DRUMMED IN HIS EARS...
IT'S A TRICK! THEY'LL BLAB AT THE LAST MINUTE! NOBODY WOULD LET THEMSELVES BE SHOT LIKE THAT FOR A STRANGER!

THE DREAD SCENE TORE AT STEVE'S EMOTIONS AND SOME SMALL SPARK WAS FANNED TO A FIERCE HEAT OF SHAME — SHAME THAT THOSE PROUD FOREIGNERS COULD SHOW A BRAVERY HE HAD NEVER BELIEVED EXISTED.
NO! I'M HERE! DON'T SHOOT HIM!
BUT EVEN AS HE SHOUTED, THERE WAS A SAVAGE BURST OF FIRING FROM THE STREET.

HORRIFIED HE STARED ABOUT HIM AND WAS STAGGERED TO FIND KOKKINOS STILL ALIVE. IT WAS GERMAN BLOOD THAT DARKLY STAINED THE GROUND.
STEADY! IT IS OVER! ALL ARE DEAD EXCEPT THAT ONE – AND HE WILL BE CAUGHT. IN AMBROS WE FIGHT – WE DO NOT SUBMIT LIKE RABBITS TO THE SNAKE!
BUT- BUT!

I KNEW YOU WOULD ATTEMPT TO GIVE UP YOUR LIFE – TO SAVE OURS! THE ENGLISH ARE BOLD MEN. THEY HAVE BEEN DEFEATED NOW BY GREATER NUMBERS – BUT MEN LIKE YOU WILL FIGHT BACK – AND WIN!

STEVE'S BACK STRAIGHTENED UNCONSCIOUSLY AT THE OLD MAN'S WORDS AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, HIS THOUGHTS FLEW BACK TO HIS COMRADES — AND THE GUN.
YOU HAD TO COME TO US FOR HELP. WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WANT?
THAT'S RIGHT! I'VE SOME PALS STUCK ON THE MOUNTAIN ROAD WITH A TRUCK AND GUN. CAN YOU LET ME HAVE SOME MEN — TO HELP?
FATHER — THE GERMAN ESCAPED HE WILL HAVE A STORY TO TELL —

DURING THAT FATEFUL EPISODE IN STEVE'S LIFE, TOM, DAN AND PETE MALONEY HAD BEEN STRUGGLING, WITHOUT SUCCESS, WITH THE TRUCK AND GUN —
GLORY BE! IT'S JORDAN — AND HE'S BROUGHT US SOME HELP!
IT CAN'T BE TRUE! THAT RAT SHOULD BE IN SPHAKIA BY NOW —

WITH THE GUN UNHOOKED, THE TRUCK WAS DRIVEN ROUND THE NARROW BEND IN THE TRACK. THEN THE DETERMINED MEN MANHANDLED THE GUN AFTER IT.
I'VE NEVER SEEN JORDAN LIKE THIS BEFORE SIR! HE'S ACTING LIKE A DIFFERENT MAN!

ONCE OUT OF THE NARROW GORGE, A FAIRLY CLEAR TRACK RAN TOWARDS THE PASS ON THE SUMMIT.
IT WILL NOT BE EASY— BUT A GUN IS A GUN! WE UNDERSTAND YOUR CARE FOR IT—
THANKS, KOKKINOS— THANKS A LOT! YOU'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT A HELP YOU'VE BEEN.

THE TRUCK AND GUN SURGED FORWARD AGAIN — BUT AHEAD OF THEM, HIDDEN IN THE ROCKS, WAS THE GERMAN WHO HAD ESCAPED THE VILLAGE AMBUSH.
A FIELD-GUN UP HERE? BUT NOT MANY ENGLANDERS WITH IT!

FRANZ MULLER WAS A GOOD SOLDIER. HE HAD BEEN ORDERED TO KILL THE ENGLISH AND THIS HE HAD BEEN DOING, VIOLENTLY, FOR DAYS. NOW, MORE OF THE ENEMY DREW CLOSE TO HIM, PRESENTING AN EASY TARGET.
I'M GLAD YOU CHANGED YOUR MIND, JORDAN, AND CAME BACK TO US —
I'LL BE HONEST, SIR — IT WAS CHANGED FOR ME! I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE GLAD TO SEE YOU OR THIS GUN AGAIN!

AS THE TRUCK DREW LEVEL WITH HIS POSITION, MULLER OPENED UP.
UGH! I'VE BEEN HIT! GET OUT OF THE TRUCK, QUICK!

MULLER'S NEXT SHOTS RAKED THE INSIDE OF THE TRUCK AND THE GUNNERS DIVED FOR COVER.
UP THERE! THERE'S ONLY ONE GUN! PIN HIM DOWN WHILE I WORK ROUND BEHIND HIM.

AS THE GERMAN PARATROOPER KEPT UP A DUEL WITH TOM AND STEVE JORDAN, PETE AND DAN BEGAN TO STALK THEIR AMBUSHER.
LOOK OUT JERRY— HERE COMES TROUBLE! YOU'VE STUCK YOUR NECK OUT A MITE TOO FAR!

THERE WAS NO MERCY IN THE YOUNG GUNNER'S HARD FACE AS HE LINED HIS SIGHTS ON THE HELMET OF THE GERMAN JUST VISIBLE IN THE SHADOWS.
THE ONLY GOOD JERRIES - ARE DEAD 'UNS!

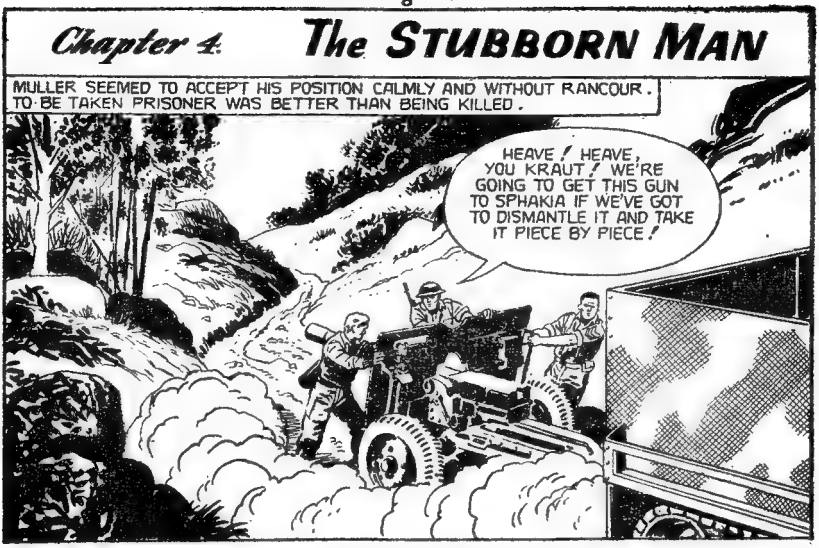
PETE'S BULLET STRUCK MULLER'S HELMET A GLANCING BLOW, STUNNING THE GERMAN. IT WAS SERGEANT DAN DRURY WHO GOT TO THE PROSTRATE MAN FIRST...
NICE WORK, MALONEY! YOU HIT HIM — BUT I DON'T THINK HE'S DEAD.
STAND BACK THEN, SARGE, I'LL FINISH HIM OFF!

DAN HELD BACK THE BLOODTHIRSTY EX-TRUMPETER WITH DIFFICULTY. KILLING AN UNCONSCIOUS MAN WAS NOT IN THE SERGEANT'S BOOK AND WHEN MULLER CAME TO, HE WAS MARCHED DOWN TO THE TRUCK.
WHAT THE DEVIL ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH 'HIM?
TAKE HIM PRISONER, SIR. HE MIGHT COME IN USEFUL.
THE SARGE'S TOO SQUEAMISH, LEAVE HIM TO ME, SIR, I'LL DEAL WITH THE PERISHER!

STEVE JORDAN HAD A SUDDEN THOUGHT...
PETE'S RIGHT, SIR! IF HE'S THE ONLY ONE – HE MUST BE THE JERRY WHO GOT AWAY FROM THE VILLAGE! WE CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY TO TELL THE TALE. THE GERMANS'D WIPE THE PLACE OFF THE MAP!

FINALLY, TO PETE MALONEY'S DISGUST, IT WAS DECIDED TO TAKE THE GERMAN WITH THEM.
WATCH OUT, KRAUT! ONE MOVE TO GET AWAY AND I'LL GIVE ME A BIG KICK TO SHOOT YOUR SQUARE HEAD OFF! UNDERSTAND?

Chapter 4. The STUBBORN MAN



A FEW YARDS MORE AND THEY COULD HAVE EASED THE TRUCK DOWN THE DESCENDING TRACK.
THAT'LL BE SPHAKIA WAY OVER THERE. I THINK THERE'S A DESTROYER OR SOME WARSHIP IN THE HARBOUR.
DAN—I DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP NOW—AFTER WE'VE COME SO FAR! CAN'T WE RUN THE GUN DOWN OURSELVES—USING DRAG-ROPES?

IT HAD NOW BECOME BIGGER THAN ANY OF THEM—THIS URGE, THIS NEED TO GET THE GUN TO SPHAKIA. EVEN MULLER, THE GERMAN, SEEMED BITTEN BY THE DESPERATE BUG THAT HAD BATTENED ON THE ENGLISHMEN.
MULLER—SWING THE TRAIL—TO THE LEFT—THE LEFT!
JA! JA! TO THE LEFT—

IT WAS HARD, GRINDING WORK IN THE HOT SUN. TWICE THE GUN NEARLY GOT AWAY ON THE STEEP SLOPE, TWICE IT WAS STOPPED, ONCE ONLY BY MULLER'S EFFORTS. EVEN PETE WAS IMPRESSED...
I DON'T GET IT, KRAUT! WHY SHOULD YOU SWEAT AND STRAIN? YOU NEARLY BROKE YOUR BACK THEN TO HOLD IT FROM GOING OVER THE EDGE.

FRANZ MULLER SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS.
WE ARE ALL SOLDIERS, JA? IT HAS BEEN A HARD BATTLE. I RESPECT YOUR DETERMINATION TO SAVE YOUR GUN. I HAVE NEVER MET ENGLANDERS UNTIL NOW—BUT IT IS WHAT I EXPECTED TO FIND...

TO PETE MALONEY, BLACK WAS BLACK, WHITE WAS WHITE — AND A GERMAN WAS A GERMAN — SOMEONE TO HATE! YET — THIS MAN MULLER WAS A DIFFICULT MAN TO HATE...
HE MUST BE SHAMMING — WAITING TO GET US OFF OUR GUARD...

PERHAPS MALONEY SLIPPED ON THE LOOSE SURFACE, PERHAPS THE GUN GAINED TOO MUCH MOMENTUM, WHATEVER IT WAS — NEAR-TRAGEDY STRUCK!
HOLD IT! IT'S GETTING AWAY!
IT'S RUNNING! THE ROPE'S SLIPPING!

THE GUN SEEMED TO HAVE COME ALIVE AS IF IT RESENTED THE INDIGNITIES HEAPED UPON IT. IT CHARGED PETE MALONEY INEXORABLY...
I-I CAN'T HOLD IT!

AS PETE WENT OVER THE EDGE, MULLER MANAGED TO GET A GRIP ON THE GUNNER'S SHIRT—BUT AT THAT MOMENT THE GUN TURNED ON ITS NEW VICTIM.
MULLER! FOR HEAVENS' SAKE— DON'T LET GO!

THE OTHERS SPRANG FORWARD TO HELP.
JORDAN, TAKE THE WEIGHT OF THE TRAIL. LIFT—UP—
STEADY—STEADY— TAKE IT GENTLY. ALL RIGHT, MALONEY. I'VE GOT YOU—

MULLER WAS HURT BADLY. EVERY BREATH WAS LIKE A KNIFE PIERCING HIS SIDE. HE HARDLY HEARD PETE'S HESITANT WORDS...
MULLER—YOU ALL RIGHT? MULLER— I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAY THIS—BUT I'M SORRY, REAL SORRY—FOR WANTING TO BUMP YOU OFF. GEE—I'D NEVER BELIEVE A GERMAN COULD BE LIKE YOU...

SURE, HE'S A GOOD JERRY ALL RIGHT. BUT WHAT DO WE DO WITH HIM NOW? WE CAN'T *CARRY* HIM—
WE COULD STRAP HIM TO THE GUN—
OR—WE COULD LET HIM GO!

FOR A MOMENT PETE WAS STAGGERED BY HIS OWN WORDS. LET THE GERMAN GO? PETE MALONEY—THE HARD, STUBBORN GERMAN-HATER!
WE *CAN'T* LET HIM GO! HE KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED AT IMBROS. HE'LL GET THEM ALL EXECUTED! ALL OF THEM...
WILL HE? WAIT—I'LL ASK HIM—

IT WAS MULLER WHO SPOKE, SLOWLY AS IF EACH WORD WAS AN EFFORT—
IT IS TRUE-I KNOW WHAT-HAPPENED-AT-IMBROS. IT-WAS-THE-LEUTNANT—KREUGER. HE-HE WOULD HAVE—HAD TWO—TWO MEN—SHOT—FOR NOTHING—
MULLER, DID YOU WANT THEM SHOT? WOULD *YOU* HAVE SHOT THEM?
PETE MALONEY GRINNED WITH DELIGHT AT THE GERMAN'S ANSWER TO HIS QUESTION...
THEY WERE-PROUD MEN-THOSE IN-IMBROS. KREUGER -WAS WRONG. I SWEAR-I WOULD NOT TELL-EVER!
THERE! WHAT DID I TELL YOU. I KNEW I COULD BACK THIS GUY MULLER!

IT WAS THE SECOND IMPOSSIBLE TRANSFORMATION DAN DRURY HAD SEEN THAT DAY!
SAY, WHAT'S COME OVER YOU!? ONE MINUTE YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT GOOD GERMANS BEING DEAD GERMANS – AND THEN – THIS? WHAT GIVES, MALONEY?
AW – I GUESS I COULD HAVE BEEN WRONG. THIS JERRY SAVED MY LIFE. I-I WANT TO DO SOMETHING FOR HIM, I RECKON.
WELL SAID, MALONEY! WE'LL MAKE HIM COMFORTABLE RIGHT THERE. HE'LL BE PICKED UP WITHIN HOURS –

THEY STRAPPED UP MULLER'S RIBS, MADE HIM A BED OF SOFT BRACKEN AND LEFT HIM FOOD AND WATER. THEN THE STRUGGLE WITH THE GUN BEGAN AGAIN.
IF WE EVER GET THIS BUNDHOOK TO SAFETY, I'LL HAVE OUR NAMES INSCRIBED ON A BRASS PLATE AND SCREWED TO ITS BARREL!
YOU KNOW, SIR – I'M JUST BEGINNING TO LIKE THIS TEMPERAMENTAL PIECE OF ORDNANCE!

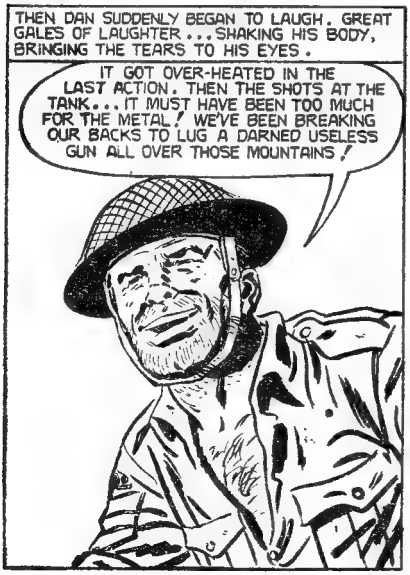
ON THE BRIDGE OF THE LONE DESTROYER IN SPHAKIA HARBOUR, THE NAVAL OFFICER COMMANDING WAS TALKING TO MAJOR FERGUSON, 16 BATTERY COMMANDER—
WE CAN'T WAIT MUCH LONGER. THEY'LL BE ATTACKING FROM THE AIR AGAIN. I THINK THE REARGUARDS MUST HAVE MADE FOR SUDA BAY.
WE'LL HAVE TO GIVE THEM UP, I'M AFRAID. I WAS HOPING THEY MAY HAVE MADE FOR THE HILL ROUTE. ALL RIGHT — LET'S GO —
HMS

THE WOUND FROM MULLER'S BULLET HAD BEEN BLEEDING STEADILY AT LAMBERT'S SHOULDER — SAPPING HIS ALREADY WEARY STRENGTH. MIST SWIRLED IN FRONT OF HIS EYES...
SERGEANT! I'M...
HOLD IT! TAKE THE STRAIN! MISTER LAMBERT'S PASSED OUT!

EVEN IN HIS NEAR-DELIRIUM, THE LIEUTENANT COULD NOT FORGET THE TASK TO WHICH THE PARTY HAD COMMITTED ITSELF.
MALONEY, PASS ME THAT WATER-BOTTLE. TAKE IT EASY, SIR —
WE'VE GOT TO GO ON — WITH THE GUN —
DAN KNEW THAT THE GUN HAD BECOME A MANIA WITH LAMBERT — A POWERFUL, DRIVING URGE . . .
NO! YOU'RE SICK, SIR. YOU'VE DONE EVERYTHING HUMANLY POSSIBLE — AND MORE! WE'LL LEAVE THE GUN!
WE CAN'T! NOT NOW —
SIR!

THE SEA — AND THERE'S A DESTROYER PULLING OUT! WE'VE HAD IT!
AND ALL BECAUSE WE HAD TO BRING THE BUNDHOOK! IT'S SHOPPED US AT THE FINISH!
THE LAST SHIP WAS LEAVING SPHAKIA! THERE COULD BE NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO SURRENDER — END UP IN A PRISON-CAMP. IT WAS A BITTER PILL TO SWALLOW AFTER ALL THEIR EFFORTS.
JUST OUR ROTTEN LUCK! WE COULD TAKE TO THE MOUNTAINS... BUT YOU NEED A DOC, SIR..
THERE'S JUST ONE CHANCE! WE'VE GOT A COUPLE OF ROUNDS IN THE TOOL LOCKERS. WE COULD FIRE ONE — THEY MAY NOTICE IT AND TURN BACK!

ANY CHANCE WAS WORTH TAKING, PETE RUSHED TO GET THE ROUND WHILE DAN SLAMMED OPEN THE BREECH...
HEY! FOR PETE'S SAKE, LOOK AT THIS! THE BREECH CHAMBER'S CRACKED!
CRACKED? IT CAN'T BE!


THEN DAN SUDDENLY BEGAN TO LAUGH. GREAT GALES OF LAUGHTER... SHAKING HIS BODY, BRINGING THE TEARS TO HIS EYES.
IT GOT OVER-HEATED IN THE LAST ACTION. THEN THE SHOTS AT THE TANK... IT MUST HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH FOR THE METAL! WE'VE BEEN BREAKING OUR BACKS TO LUG A DARNED USELESS GUN ALL OVER THOSE MOUNTAINS!

THE LAUGHTER CAUGHT THE OTHERS AND FOR A MOMENT THEY GAVE WAY TO SOMETHING NEAR HYSTERIA. THEN TOM RECOVERED HIS WITS...
WAIT! THIS IS GETTING US NOWHERE. LET'S BLOW UP THE GUN ANYWAY! WE CAN FIRE IT WITH THE LONG LANYARD!
BY GOLLY, WE CAN, SIR! WE CAN FIRE IT FROM COVER...

THEY LOADED THE GUN, THEN TOOK COVER BEHIND A ROCK OUTCROP AT THE SIDE OF THE TRACK. TOM PULLED THE LANYARD...
THE DISTANT SOUND OF THE EXPLOSION BROUGHT THE DESTROYER'S OFFICERS AND MAJOR FERGUSON TO THE BRIDGE RAIL...
THE HUN'S GOT SOME ORDNANCE ROUND HERE AT LAST. I GUESS WE'RE OUT OF RANGE, THOUGH...
IT'S NOT THE HUN! I CAN SEE 'EM! IT'S SOME OF OUR LOT. THEY'RE WEARING K.D. YOU'VE GOT TO TURN BACK!

THE FOUR WEARY GUNNERS STUMBLED DOWN THE MOUNTAIN TRACK LEADING TO SPHAKIA, LEAVING BEHIND THEM THE SORRY REMAINS OF WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN A 25-POUNDER GUN...
THE DESTROYER'S BEGINNING TO SWING BACK! YES...THEY'RE COMING IN AGAIN! THE SHOT DID IT!
YES... WHEN YOU COME TO THINK OF IT... IT WAS THE GUN THAT SAVED US, AFTER ALL!

ON BOARD, THEY FOUND THE HEADQUARTERS STAFF OF 16 BATTERY, WHICH HAD EMBARKED AT SUDA BAY TWO DAYS EARLIER...
YOU MEAN... THAT WAS THE GUN? LAMBERT —YOU'RE NOT PULLING MY LEG?
NO, MAJOR. IT LOOKS AS IF I'VE MADE A MESS OF IT AGAIN. I'VE COME ON BOARD EMPTY-HANDED ...AS I DID IN GREECE...

DAN HAD ALSO MET HIS OLD FRIEND, THE BATTERY-SERGEANT-MAJOR...
YOU MUST HAVE FELT A PROPER LOT OF CLOTS WHEN YOU FOUND THE CRACKED CHAMBER! I'LL BET YOU WISH YOU'D LEFT THE PERISHING GUN ON THE NORTH COAST...
YOU'RE WRONG THERE, JOE. IT SERVED ITS PURPOSE IN ITS OWN FUNNY WAY...

YES, THOUGHT SERGEANT DAN DRURY... IT'S CHANGED THE LIVES OF THOSE THREE MEN! MINE, TOO, IF IT COMES TO THAT. IT'S TAUGHT ME MORE ABOUT MEN THAN I EVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE.
IT WAS A FIRST-CLASS SHOW, TOM! THERE'LL BE A TROOP FOR YOU TO COMMAND IN THE WESTERN DESERT... AND I'LL SEE THE GENERAL HEARS ABOUT IT. THE REGIMENT CAN BE PROUD OF YOU!
STEVIE... YOU KNOW — YOU'RE NOT SUCH A BAD GUY AFTER ALL... EVEN IF YOU ARE A GREASY DRIVER! I HOPE THEY KEEP US TOGETHER AFTER THIS...
SO DO I, PETE... SO DO I...

THREE WEEKS LATER, BACK IN ALEXANDRIA, 16 BATTERY DREW ITS NEW EQUIPMENT, RECEIVED ITS REINFORCEMENTS. THE RETREATS FROM GREECE AND CRETE WERE NEARLY FORGOTTEN. THE AFRIKA KORPS WAS MAKING A NAME FOR ITSELF IN THE DESERT AND 'D' TROOP WAS ITCHING TO HAVE A BASH AT THEM!
'D' TROOP... ATTEN—SHUN!

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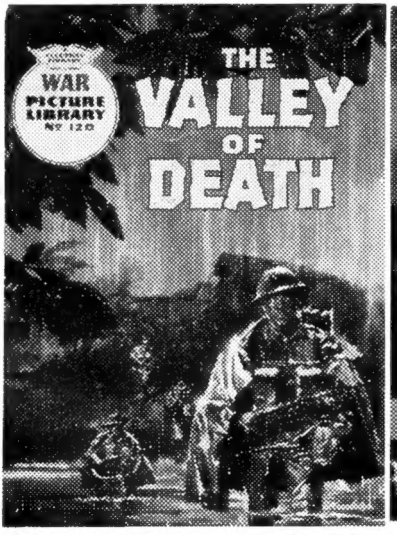

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